

# **You Dig Your Grave with Your Knife and Fork**

**By Dr. Mark Lawrie**

Obesity is now the second most deadly preventable health problem after smoking in Canada. The words Obesity Epidemic are being used by Public Health officials to describe the seriousness of the problem. Obesity is now a recognized risk factor for many medical conditions, and no longer simply a body image issue. A branch of Medicine called Bariatrics (from the Greek: Barios-fat, and Iatros-physician) includes surgeons who perform Bariatric surgical procedures for weight loss and improved health.

A standardized measure of obesity is the Body Mass Index or BMI –calculated from your height and weight. Your physician can help you understand your number-based on your body type, ethnic background. Normal weight is associated with a BMI of 20-25 and Obesity is greater than 30. Health risks rise dramatically as BMI increases beyond 35-40.

Many medical conditions can aggravate or be associated with the Obese condition. Depression and mood disorders need to be considered as they are treatable if recognized, Hormonal Conditions with low Testosterone levels are common in obese men and treatment may improve their quality of life significantly. Sleep disorders –especially Sleep Apnea (usually noticed by a bed partner as breath holding and snoring during sleep) are often overlooked and cause daytime sleepiness, fatigue, weight gain. The Fatty Liver condition related to obesity is a more common cause of Liver Cirrhosis than alcohol. Your physician can advise you about monitoring for this if you are obese. Many people are unaware that many common Cancers are more prevalent with Obesity.

Obesity treatment is complex due to the many contributing causes and health consequences for a given individual. More serious cases, with medical complications such as heart disease or diabetes may require prescription medications or even surgery as options to achieve health goals. Public health initiatives and changes in family nutrition will be helpful in the longer term. Learning more about Obesity and its management can help improve our children's health as well as our own.

Individuals who begin to take ownership and responsibility for their health need to know their BMI number, their blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugars, and have screening lab work if appropriate. An integrated plan for managing obesity includes screening for the associated conditions mentioned above, following healthy nutritional guidelines, and becoming more physically active. Physical activity in the form of walking 5 days a week, using a pedometer for guidance is a good start for many people. Your physician and allied health professionals, including Physiotherapists, Exercise Trainers, Dieticians, Pharmacists and Psychologists can all be helpful in various aspects of Obesity management and general Lifestyle improvement.

More help is available than ever for understanding and dealing with Obesity and its related health conditions. Getting started is a challenge for most of us. Healthy behavioral Change starts when we recognize a problem.

***City Centre Health and Fitness offers Medical Weight Loss, Lifestyle Change and Men's Health Programs. Contact Kirby at 250-487-1481***